

Notes and Excerpts

Item 1 (pp. 59-65)

On 21 February 1972, President Richard Nixon arrived in Beijing for high-level meetings with top Chinese officials. Only a few hours after his landing, Chairman Mao Zedong summoned Nixon to his quarters in the Forbidden City. Anxious to raise China's status in the world community and to develop relations with Washington as a balance against Moscow, Mao was eager to meet with Nixon. Although Nixon and Kissinger realized, when meeting Mao, that his health was poor, it was a state secret that heart and lung problems had almost caused Mao's death in the previous weeks. Both Nixon and Kissinger gave detailed accounts of this meeting in their memoirs but they failed to mention that Mao may have found Nixon a little tedious. After Nixon tried to justify his pro-Pakistani, anti-Indian stance during the South Asian War, Mao asked Nixon to "do a little less briefing." Nor did they mention Nixon's references to Japan's "doubts" about the U.S. opening to China. Then as now, the Japanese must have wondered whether Washington would develop relations with Beijing at Tokyo's expense.

Item 2 (pp. 45, 50-51)

Months before Nixon's visit but a few weeks after Henry Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing in July 1971, Soviet ambassador asked Kissinger on 17 August 1971 whether he had provided the Chinese with intelligence information on Soviet military dispositions. Kissinger denied that he had, but various secondary accounts (e.g., Raymond Garthoff, Detente and Confrontation, 1994, p. 262) suggest, however, that he soon provided intelligence data to the Chinese as early as his October 1971 visit to Beijing. The relevant documents from October 1971 remain classified but new evidence shows that Kissinger was more than willing to provide sensitive intelligence information to the Chinese. The transcript of a meeting on 13 December, during the Indian-Pakistan war, shows Kissinger offering Ambassador to the UN Huang Hua highly sensitive information, derived from reconnaissance satellite photography, on Soviet military deployments. Whenever Kissinger made his first offer of intelligence information, this was an important step in the Nixon administration's extraordinary effort to tilt U.S. policy toward Beijing.

Item 3 (pp. 99-100)

In February 1973, Henry Kissinger made his fifth visit to Beijing for talks with the Chinese leadership. With the signing of the Vietnam war peace agreement in January, Kissinger was more welcome than he had been in earlier visits. On 18

February, he had his first private conversation with Chairman Mao Zedong; this excerpt shows Mao conveying doubts about U.S. policy, suggesting that Washington might condone a Soviet attack on China as a way to cripple Moscow. Kissinger took exception but Mao remained uncertain. In the course of the dialogue translator Tang Wansheng and Foreign Ministry official Wang Hairong challenged Mao's cracks about the bravery of Chinese women.

Item 4 (pp. 142-44)

To win Beijing's favor and strengthen the U.S. position against the Soviet Union, Kissinger routinely gave the Chinese detailed briefings on his talks with Soviet leaders, always telling Beijing's representatives that he would give the Soviets no information on U.S.-China relations. On 6 July 1973, only a few days after the U.S.-Soviet summit in Washington, D.C. and San Clemente, CA, Kissinger met with Chinese Ambassador Huang Zhen, summarizing for him the discussions with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, their discussions of China in particular. The record of the Nixon-Brezhnev meetings is still classified (although undergoing declassification review) so it remains to be seen how faithful Kissinger's account was. Certainly, Kissinger's report was dire, perhaps meant to make Beijing a little anxious and even more interested in good relations with Washington as a balance against Moscow. Kissinger's memoir, Years of Upheaval (1981) include no details on the secret discussions with the Chinese on U.S.-Soviet relations, one of a number of deliberate omissions.

Item 5 (pp. 203-04)

As part of his effort to strengthen the tilt toward China, Henry Kissinger had a number of secret meetings with Zhou Enlai during his November 1973 visit that went unremarked in his memoir account. Kissinger's offer of a "hot line" to Zhou, as a way to provide speedy transmission from Washington to Beijing of strategic warning information on Soviet military maneuvers may have represented the one of his most critically important efforts to establish security relations with Beijing. As Gromyko had already warned Kissinger that there would be serious repercussions if the U.S. and China began a military relationship, Kissinger's initiative involved an element of risk that, if revealed, could have had damaging consequences for U.S.-Soviet detente. In any event, the Chinese never responded to Kissinger's hot line proposal, no doubt because they were less interested in getting too close to the United States. It was not until June 1998 that Beijing and Washington signed off an a hot line agreement but long before that, as early as the mid-1970s, the United States was setting up sophisticated listening posts in China for the monitoring of Soviet missile tests, military communications, etc., with the Chinese receiving their share of the take. According to a 25 June 1989 Washington Post article by George

Lardner, even as U.S.-China diplomatic relations reached a nadir after the Tienanmen Square massacre, it was business as usual at the secret listening posts.

Item 6 (pp. 231-33)

While Kissinger worked at forging close relations with Beijing, he attempted to sustain detente with the Soviet Union by negotiating Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT) agreements and promoting economic contacts. In March 1974, when Kissinger journeyed to Moscow for to make plans for President Nixon's forthcoming trip to the Soviet Union, the SALT talks were stalemated while Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wa), a key opponent of detente, was trying to impede economic cooperation by linking it with Soviet policy on Jewish emigration. Moreover, President Nixon was under growing attack for the Watergate coverup. As this excerpt from their talks on 25 March 1974 suggests, both Kissinger and Brezhnev optimistically treated these difficulties as transitory and, in their opening statements, affirmed their commitment to "irreversible" U.S.-Soviet cooperation. Much of the language is boilerplate but light touches emerge, such as the jokes over Brezhnev's MIRVed cigarette case and the joking suggestion that if Kissinger visited the countryside in disguise he would learn the depth of the public commitment to detente.

Item 7 (pp. 246-47)

The next day, during conversations on the Conference on European Security and Cooperation, Brezhnev showed a lighter touch when he bantered with Kissinger on the language of diplomacy.

Item 8 (pp. 384-86)

By the fall of 1975, U.S.-Soviet detente was growing shaky--economic cooperation had flopped and the SALT negotiations, after some progress in late 1974, were at dead center. The summer of 1975, however, saw the Helsinki summit, where Eastern and Western European countries, joined by the United States, Canada, and the Soviet Union signed the final act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). With its important implications for human rights in the Soviet block, the Helsinki agreement was a milestone in détente's short history. Nevertheless, during meetings with staff advisers Kissinger disparaged the CSCE, once declaring that the agreement could be "written in Sanskrit for all I care." China's deeply anti-Soviet Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping felt even more strongly about the Helsinki agreement. Strongly critical of detente, Deng minced no words when he met with Kissinger in October 1975. As the following excerpts from their 20 October meeting suggests, in U.S.-China relations, the bloom was off the rose.

Item 9 (p. 397)

During his October 1975 visit, Kissinger had his final private meeting with Mao, during which the Chairman indicated his unhappiness about the state of U.S.-China relations. During their talk, on 21 October, Mao posed questions about the ownership of the New York Times and the Washington Post that sounded as if he was a follower of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

Item 10 (p. 453)

By late 1975, a civil war between rival nationalist movements in Angola had become a significant problem in U.S.-Soviet relations. On the one hand, the United States and apartheid South Africa were supporting the National Front for the Liberation of Angola [FNLA] and the Union for the Total Liberation of Angola [UNITA]. On the other hand, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola [MPLA], had Soviet and Cuban support. The Cubans had played important advisory roles but as the South Africa entered the fighting in the fall of 1975, Cuban troops, airlifted across the Atlantic, played direct combat roles. By the time that Kissinger visited Moscow in January 1976 for SALT talks with Brezhnev and Gromyko, the MPLA had soundly beaten the FNLA. The sting of defeat rankled Kissinger and during his meetings with Brezhnev and Gromyko he strongly objected to the Cuban role and suggested that Soviet assistance to the MPLA was inconsistent with the superpower detente. Believing otherwise, the Soviets refused to change their course. The following excerpt from a meeting between Brezhnev, Gromyko, and Kissinger on 22 January showed the two sides at loggerheads, with Brezhnev even refusing to discuss Angola.

Item 11 (p. 406)

A major problem in U.S.-China relations in the mid-1970s was how and when to establish full diplomatic relations. The U.S. and China both had liaison offices in each other's capitals headed by officials with ambassadorial rank but Beijing refused to establish formal diplomatic ties until the United States had broken relations with Taiwan. This was a delicate issue for the Nixon and Ford administrations because of the strength of the Taiwan lobby which had close ties to Democrats and Republicans, but especially to GOP conservatives. As the following conversation on 19 March 1976 suggested, neither President Ford or Kissinger saw a way out of the dilemma; normalization could not be delayed for long. The conversation took place after Ford had appointed Philadelphia investment banker Thomas Gates as the new liaison chief in Beijing to replace George Bush who was now heading the CIA. As 1976 was an election year, Gates's tenure would be uncertain but Ford wanted to ensure that the United States had a high level person in Beijing. This was especially important because with Premier Zhou Enlai's death,

Mao had appointed a new premier Hua Guofeng and it was important to establish contact with him. Former president Nixon had met Hua during a trip to China but Kissinger believed that more needed to be learned about the new premier.

[Item 12 \(pp. 39-40\)](#)

With so much of the documentary record on Nixon-era national security policy still classified, historians and political scientists have had to puzzle out Nixon's and Kissinger's relative contributions to policymaking. For example, it remains somewhat uncertain whether it was Nixon or Kissinger who set the pace in decisions on the opening to China. Nonetheless, significant evidence points to Nixon's critically important role as foreign policy strategist. For example, his article in Foreign Affairs (1967) emphasized the need for a rapprochement with China. Also of interest is the following excerpt from a conversation between President Richard Nixon and French President Georges Pompidou, with Kissinger not present, when they met on the Azores on 14 December 1971. Not a Kissinger transcript--the document was prepared by General Vernon Walters, the U.S. Army attaché in Paris--the document shows Nixon's assurance as a Cold War strategist and suggests that he had substantial capacity for setting the policy framework within which Kissinger had to operate. In this excerpt, Nixon explained to Pompidou why he found it essential to support a detente--the "negotiating track"--with the Soviet Union.

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